

**Silver Spring
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
July 11, 2013**

2

Abbreviations

FAR = Floor Area Ratio

MCDOT = Montgomery County Dept. of Transportation

M-NCPPC = Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

SHA = Maryland State Highway Administration

~~~~~

**Item 1, 2 & 3 – Introduction/Minutes/Chair Comments:** Members and guest introduced themselves.

**Item 4 – Presentation:** **Matt Folden**, M-NCPPC, explained the role of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) in land regulation and development. The bi-county Commission, established in 1927, is comprised of five representatives from Montgomery County and five from Prince Georges County. **Francoise Carrier** is current chair of the Montgomery County Planning Board.

**Mr. Folden** explained that the department is arranged in three overall geographic planning areas. Staff from each area review projects affecting their specific area. The Montgomery County Planning Board reviews development applications and subdivision decisions. The Board also handle transit projects such as the Purple Line and BRT, and historic preservation.

**Mr. Folden** is a planner for Area 1 (urban area within the I-495 Beltway). He said that the Community-Based Planning Division does work all over Montgomery County and not just in specific areas. Area 1 is comprised of representatives from all divisions and includes the following functional team members:

- Transportation Planner
- Environmental Planner
- Master and Urban Design Planner
- Subdivision Planning Specialist

**Mr. Folden** explained that the Silver Spring Central Business District (CBD) is located between Spring Street and the District line at Eastern Avenue. Each section in Area 1 has its own Master Plan which sets out the long range planning in that specific area. **Mr. Carlson** added that the Silver Spring CBD and TMD boundaries are the same.

**Mr. Folden** explained that the Silver Spring Sector Plan shows the proposed planned uses till 2030. The plan gives zoning information regarding the type of structure that can be built in specific areas and includes factors such as such height and density.

**Samantha Mazo** explained how the County's zoning rewrite will change policy areas. She said that zones will change from providing exact height and density limits to having more flexibility where any additional height/density is offset by public amenities. The zoning rewrite will introduce new calculations for Floor Area Ratio (FAR - a measure of the total area a building occupies). Changing of the names of properties to streamline the process is also part of the rewrite. **Ms. Mazo** said that impact of the zoning ordinance will not be felt for at least 10-20 years due to the grandfathering and extension of many project approvals. Developments up to six months prior to rewrite falls under current zoning laws.

**Mr. Folden** added that the zoning ordinances have been around for decades to prevent non-conforming uses and to protect quality of life. One of the objectives of the zone rewrite is to make it easy for the average citizen to understand. Each zone supports a use, and each use generates a certain number of trips. Developers can change uses under the zone as long as they are not changing the transportation impact. New owners can also build under the previous owner's approvals, since titles run with the land; there are special exception uses, such as an accessory apartment.

He explained that the Silver Spring Master Plan currently in use was approved by the Planning Board in 2000. Each policy area has a sector plan which modifies the Bi-county Development Master Plan that began in 1964, with updates in 1969 and 1993, and calls for development along the I-270 and I-95 corridors.

The Committee discussed complications of minor master plans in the development process regarding zoning. The Planning Board reviews a small number of minor master plans a year and some of the proposed changes seem to conflict with adequate transportation management. It was explained that it takes time before the conception of transit oriented projects from master plans are seen in development, usually a 20-25 year span. Several factors were discussed as possible causes:

- Diverse owner structure of existing development
- Market changes
- Lack of undeveloped space in CBD areas
- The cycle review of master plans
- Population factors help to shape and develop master plans

In addition to sector plans as a whole, **Mr. Folden** discussed individual projects and properties within the Silver Spring CBD such as United Therapeutics. Showing a map of the site to the Committee, he noted the street patterns and explained how they were envisioned based on lighting and right-of-way dedication. In regard to The Blairs redevelopment, he discussed how the Master Plan recommended a new roadway to bifurcate the site. How a particular site is developed is his main focus. The roads and operation of traffic signals are the focus of the County's Dept. of Transportation (MCDOT).

Other jurisdictions, such as MD State Highway Administration (SHA), MC Fire & Rescue, Parks, and utility companies collaborate with M-NCPPC making recommendations that are finalized at the Development Review Team meetings.

In regards to road and traffic improvements surrounding the site, decisions are based on jurisdiction – if the road is owned by the SHA or County. **Mr. Folden** commented that SHA is becoming more receptive to pedestrian safety issues, especially in the down County areas and are more likely to evaluate M-NCPPC concerns. For example, the Pedestrian Road Safety Audit will make improvements along Colesville road from Dale to Fenton Streets. There was a recent agency stakeholder meeting that planned a community outreach for public input on the audit.

**Mr. Folden** explained that bicycles are viewed for the large part as vehicles during road safety audits, although sometimes they can be considered pedestrians. When sharrows are recommended (lanes that are shared by both cars and bicycles), bikes are viewed as vehicles. The 2005 Countywide Functional Bike Ways Master Plan gives direction as to how bikes are recognized in a particular area. **Mr. Folden** stated a few other facts about bikes:

- Bikes can use the full lane
- Diamond signs are advisory
- Rectangular signs are regulatory

The Planning Board meets every Thursday, and meetings are open to the public. Reports are posted 10 days in advance of meetings; information can be found on the Planning Board website. Depending on time, all agenda items may not be addressed.

**Jim Bunch** asked if the County Council can make changes to plans after the Planning Board has approved them. **Mr. Folden** said that by the time Council receives plans from the Planning Board they have already been vetted by the public; however Council still has the ability to amend. Once approved by the County Council, it becomes the guideline for development in a particular area.

**VOTE: The Committee approved June's minutes with changes.**

**Item 5 – Discussion/Action-Previous Meetings:** **Ms. Mazo** discussed writing a letter to the Planning Board in support of The Blairs and United Therapeutics developments. As the representative from the Blairs, **Molly King** abstained. Retaining the townhouses and Blair House, the Blairs plan proposes a 27 acre all rental property redevelopment beginning with the office building on Colesville road. The multiphased redevelopment process is projected to take 25 years to complete. Information is provided on The Blairs website. Some features of the site redevelopment include:

- Open active spaces and parks
- Redevelopment of the Giant grocery and plaza
- Private driveways and ample residential parking
- Improved pedestrian and public access
- Private street from Draper lane to Blair Mill to improve vehicular circulation

**Ms. Mazo** said the development plan is in line with smart growth and transit oriented initiatives.

The Committee discussed issues related to The Blairs site:

- Public access – opening the private parks to the public. MNCPPC met with Blair developers in this regard
- Mitigating pedestrian traffic during the construction process – lighting, site lines and additional signage-improving access to the Metro
- Asking MSHA to study placing a median break on Colesville at Draper Lane – request traffic study to look at queuing or placing crosswalk or signal
- Safety concerns to crossing East West Highway at The Blair Plaza entrance; remedy options included adding a pedestrian bridge, crosswalks and signalized lights-relocation of the traffic signal to the west, additional signage
- Concerns with crossing East West Highway between Colesville Road and Georgia Avenue

**Ms. Mazo** said the letter should address providing greater access around the Blairs property resulting in traffic calming and to better facilitate pedestrian crossing experience as outlined in the Sector Plan. She commented that a separate letter should address pedestrian issues beyond the site such as East West between Colesville Road and Georgia Avenue.

In regard to the United Therapeutics letter, **Ms. Mazo** reported that the project is generally good and recommended a letter supporting **Mr. Folden** remarks in squaring the crosswalks. She commented that requiring tenants to follow the net zero initiative may limit making the streetscape more active. The Committee commented on United Therapeutics reconsider and provide bikesharing on their site.

**VOTE: The Committee voted to circulate a letter in regard to Blairs and United Therapeutics.**

**Next meeting September 12, 2013**

**Silver Spring Transportation Management District Advisory Committee Attendance Sheet  
July 11, 2013**

|                                                |                                  |                |               |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Voting Members (12)</b>                     |                                  |                |               |
| <b>Name</b>                                    | <b>Affiliation</b>               | <b>Present</b> | <b>Absent</b> |
| <b>Chamber Members (3)</b>                     |                                  |                |               |
| Arnetta Haines                                 | Social and Scientific Systems    | X              |               |
| Michael Meszaros                               | Digital Industry, Inc.           | X              |               |
| Samantha Mazo / Co-chair                       | Linowes and Blocher LLP          | X              |               |
| <b>Citizens Advisory Board Members (3)</b>     |                                  |                |               |
| Jim Bunch                                      | Kemp Mill, Four Corners, East SS | X              |               |
| Phil Olivetti                                  | North & West Sector Plan Area    | X              |               |
| Andrew Wexler / Co-chair                       | CBD Resident                     | X              |               |
| <b>Employers less than 50 employees (3)</b>    |                                  |                |               |
| Vacant                                         |                                  |                |               |
| Everton Latty                                  | iDeal Decisions, Inc.            | X              |               |
| Valerie Spencer                                | MayaTech                         |                | X             |
| <b>Employers with 50 or more employees (3)</b> |                                  |                |               |
| G. Michael Price                               | Discovery Communications         | X              |               |
| Molly King                                     | The Blairs                       | X              |               |
| Vacant                                         |                                  |                |               |
| <b>Non-Voting Members (3)</b>                  |                                  |                |               |
| Sandra Brecher, DOT Transit Services           | DOT Director or Designee         |                | X             |
| Matthew Folden                                 | M-NCPPC                          | X              |               |
| Reemberto Rodriguez                            | Silver Spring Regional Center    |                | X             |
| Vacant                                         | Montgomery County Police         |                |               |
| <b>Staff</b>                                   |                                  |                |               |
| Nakengi Byrd                                   | DOT, Commuter Services           | X              |               |
| Jim Carlson                                    | DOT, Commuter Services           | X              |               |
| <b>Guests</b>                                  |                                  |                |               |
| Yvette Freeman                                 | Silver Spring Urban District     | X              |               |
| Kyle Haas                                      | CBD Resident                     | X              |               |
| Harriet Quinn                                  | Woodmoor Park Civic Association  | X              |               |
|                                                |                                  |                |               |
|                                                |                                  |                |               |
|                                                |                                  |                |               |
|                                                |                                  |                |               |
|                                                |                                  |                |               |
|                                                |                                  |                |               |